Sutton Virtual School
 London Borough of Sutton


**Children’s Social Care Practice Directive**

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| Subject: | **Promoting the education of children**  **who have a social worker** | Issue Date: | January 2023 |
| Author: | Sara Martin  Sutton Virtual School | Review Date: | September 2024 |
| Target Group: | Social workers, specialist family support workers, Team Managers and Service Managers  *Please read this in conjunction with the LSCP protocols, other Practice Directives and the Promoting CWSW Guidance document* | | |

1. **INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE**

Children in need face significant barriers to education and are disadvantaged due to their adverse experiences, found to be most commonly neglect and abuse. The [Children in Need Review](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-children-in-need) (2019) found that, on average, children in need have poorer outcomes than their peers at every stage of their education, from Early Years to A-levels. By working in partnership with families, education settings and Cognus education services, social care practitioners can help to address the disadvantage that children in need experience, and work collaboratively to overcome these barriers.

1. **DEFINITIONS**

The term ‘children with a social worker’ (CWSW) refers to all children between 0-18 years old who are subject to a Child in Need (CiN) plan, a Child Protection plan (CPP), and those who have a disability and a social worker. The Government define this cohort as also including all children who have previously needed a social worker within the past 6 years due to safeguarding and/or welfare reasons.

1. **THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN PROMOTING EDUCATION**

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| 1. **Working in partnership with education settings and education services (Cognus)** |

Multi-agency working can effectively address the barriers to education that children experience. It is incumbent upon everyone working with children with a social worker to take a proactive, collaborative approach and to follow up on agreed actions, to avoid any delay in children receiving the support that they need.

Expectations

* Keep regular contact with the school’s Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and keep them updated of any changes to the child’s care plan, important developments, or information that the school needs to be aware of.
* Be proactive in working with other agencies to address barriers to education and where appropriate, make referrals to/ seek advice from wider agencies, e.g. the Therapeutic Hub, the [Vulnerable Pupils Panel](https://www.cognus.org.uk/services-for-professionals/school-inclusion/vulnerable-pupils-panel/) or the Senior Multi-Agency Education Problem-Solving panel meeting (referral form: [Snr Multi Agency Education Problem Solving Panel](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fforms.gle%2FuR7qgDtAxAbGgjkq8&data=05%7C01%7Csara.martin%40cognus.org.uk%7Cceeb07158261426e10d308da9fa730ca%7Ca383de7d7d37405685d905076fba603f%7C0%7C0%7C637997837671775088%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=p53JzJHBGn51e6ibcnANN7VHPlZjwMMi6ECMygS4Bho%3D&reserved=0)).
* Encourage parents’ active involvement in their child’s education so they promote education in the home, set positive boundaries and where needed, advocate for their child;
* Offer to undertake joint visits with education professionals where needed, including if a child is Electively Home Educated, experiencing difficulty engaging or attending school.

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| 1. **Promoting education in reviews and conferences** |

Expectations

* Request that the school provides an educational update at CIN/CPP reviews, including attendance and punctuality, and record this in review meetings.
* Where there are educational barriers, the school should set out how they will address these, and this should be discussed in review meetings with time-bound follow-up.

Promoting school attendance

School attendance acts as a protective factor: it can reduce exposure to safeguarding concerns, and provides much wider development, including socialisation and access to support.

* Where attendance is an issue, CIN/CP action plans must include actions that address the barrier(s) to their attendance, with clear shared understanding of who will lead on agreed actions.
* consider what family/ parent support could be provided or signposted, e.g. a family support worker, parenting support or training, and Cognus resources on [EBSA](https://www.cognus.org.uk/resources/resources-for-professionals/educational-psychology-resources/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa/) (emotionally based school avoidance).

Exclusions and Suspensions

* If a child receives a suspension (previously known as a ‘fixed term exclusion’), the school should invite the child and parent to a reintegration meeting and discuss what support the child might need going forward.
* If a child is permanently excluded, the school should inform the parent and the social worker. In this instance, ensure that parents know their right to appeal and where appropriate, support them to challenge the exclusion through the school’s Governing Body, signposting the [Government exclusions guidance](https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/challenging-exclusion).
* You could refer to the resources on the Cognus Inclusion webpage for support and guidance – there is information for [families](https://www.cognus.org.uk/services-for-families/school-exclusion/information-advice-and-guidance/) and for [professionals](https://www.cognus.org.uk/services-for-professionals/school-exclusion/).

Elective Home Education (EHE)

School attendance is a proactive factor, so where a child is subject to a CiN or CP plan and electively home educated, the safeguarding and suitability of education should be considered robustly and challenged if not sufficient.

* When a family notifies the local authority of their intention to home educate, local authorities, schools, and social workers should work together to coordinate a meeting with parents. This is to ensure the parents have considered what is in the best interests of the child and fully understand their statutory responsibilities to provide suitable education at home.
* Signpost the Government’s [EHE guidance for parents](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/791528/EHE_guidance_for_parentsafterconsultationv2.2.pdf), and where you consider elective home education not to be in the child’s best interest, advocate for the child by making this clear to the parent and support them to address the issues for them considering EHE.
* If a child becomes elective home educated (EHE), contact the Cognus [Inclusion team](https://www.cognus.org.uk/services-for-professionals/school-inclusion/#:~:text=To%20speak%20to%20a%20member,inclusion%40cognus.org.uk) to inform them of any safeguarding concerns, in respect of both the child and professionals who might visit the home.
* Carry out a joint visit with a member of the Inclusion team to jointly assess the suitability of home education and the safeguarding of the child.
* More information for [families](https://www.cognus.org.uk/services-for-families/elective-home-education/) and [professionals](https://www.cognus.org.uk/services-for-professionals/elective-home-education/) is available on the Inclusion webpage.

Supporting child with Special Education Need or Disabilities (SEND)

Many children subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection plan already experience disadvantage that affects their educational outcomes, and those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) often experience multiple barriers to their learning. It is vital that parents, schools and social workers work to ensure that the child receives the tailored support they need to access their learning and fulfil their potential.

Expectations

* If a child is being assessed for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), provide a written contribution when the SEN team are carrying out the EHC Needs Assessment, to summarise any social care needs which relate to their SEN.
* Attend Next Steps meetings/ Annual Reviews where needed.
* Refer to the [SEN Code of Practice](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf) and [Sutton SEND guidance](https://www.cognus.org.uk/services-for-professionals/special-educational-needs/) for more information where needed.

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| 1. **Information-sharing and follow-up**: |

When requesting or providing access to data on children with a social worker, all relevant parties should consider the statutory guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children’ and ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’), which states that information sharing is vital in promoting children’s welfare, including their educational outcomes.

Expectations

* where professionals raise concerns about a child’s outcomes, well-being, or education, reflect this in reviews/meeting minutes and agree follow-up.
* if a child you’re working with starts a new school or education setting, liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and share any important information.
* When handing a case to a new social worker or closing a case, inform the school and other professionals working with the family.
* Be proactive in sharing key information with relevant professionals working with the child/ family to contribute to effective multi-agency working, including updating school information on Mosaic.